

# THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

*This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.*

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## CO-OPERATIVE CHRISTIAN WORK IN WORCESTERSHIRE FACTORIES

A remarkable war-time story of new links between Church and people comes from the Diocese of Worcester, where under the leadership of the Bishop, churches of varying denominations have co-operatively made contact with factories and other centres of public life.

It began with the Day of Prayer on September 3rd, 1942, before which the Bishop of Worcester, Dr. Wilson Cash, met one hundred men at a Rotary lunch. He suggested to them that the Church would like to come to the people by entering the factories on the day of National Prayer. "You are beating at an open door," they replied; "we have waited for this for years." As a result a letter from the Bishop to factory managers was put in the hands of the clergy, who made their own contacts with factories on the strength of the letter. As a result, hundreds of meetings were held throughout the country on the first week-day of National Prayer.

The next big step was the organisation of carol services in the factories at Christmas. These proved immensely popular. In some cases robed choirs were taken into the factories; in others the work people themselves joined in community singing of Christmas carols.

As Good Friday, 1943, approached, the Bishop was asked by various factories whether services could be arranged in the factories on that day. He cancelled his own engagements and took instead short services in six different factories; most of them were attended by thronging congregations, and the

services were frequently relayed throughout the whole factory premises. In all, fifteen services were held on that Good Friday, and at the conclusion there was a mass service conducted co-operatively in the Baxter Memorial Church at Kidderminster. For this occasion Richard Baxter's chair was brought from the Parish Church and set up in the Congregational Church as a sign of fellowship.

When September 3rd came round again there were once more a large number of factory services, and on this occasion contact with the people was widened by a large number of services held in public-houses. Those making use of the bars were in most cases very ready to join in simple prayers for their friends at the front.

Harvest Festival services were asked for, not only in public-houses, but especially in a large busmen's shelter. The busmen, most of whom had allotments of their own, requested the clergy to arrange a Harvest Festival for them on their own club premises, which were duly decorated by them for the occasion.

Contact with the cinemas has led to further opportunities for Christian witness as a result of new contacts gained. One large cinema which has a crowded children's matinée each Saturday, has asked for a short service to be conducted for the children weekly. This is being done.

In some factories, the services have become regular events, and in one of them there is a fortnightly service for the day and night shifts respectively. A clergyman goes into

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the factory and conducts a service at 1 a.m. for the night shift.

One factory has been so impressed by the work of the clergy that it has put aside a generous sum of money to secure the permanent services of a chaplain on its premises. The money provided covers a good part of a chaplain's stipend. Before taking over the work the chaplain appointed spent some time as an ordinary worker in the factory. He thus assured himself of the opportunity and the welcome which awaited him before embarking on his new work.

## THE POWER OF DANISH CHRISTIANITY

A review of the part played by the Church in Danish resistance appeared recently in the Swedish paper *Svenska Morgonbladet*. Readers of *Spiritual Issues* will be interested to see this general survey, although some of the details will already be familiar to them.

"Thanks to their spiritual and moral courage, the Danish people have been able to say a unanimous 'No' to the German demands. People, Parliament, and Government found themselves completely united on August 29th.

"Attention is often concentrated on Danish culture and tradition, but much too often the influence of the Christian element in Denmark," as one meets it in the Danish Church and in all kinds of Christian organisations, is forgotten. The Danish Church has not a great Bishop like Berggrav of Norway, yet all the Danish disciples of Christ, from the greatest to the least, can be said to be Berggravs in miniature.

"The attitude of Danish Christians has been as clear as that of their Norwegian brothers. In every pulpit of the land, in town as well as country, the same energetic protests are heard against violence, protests which are repeated fearlessly and forcibly each Sunday. A very clear idea has been given to the congregations as to what has happened from time to time: this has been done along strong national lines, yet without arousing that hate against the enemy which is found in other countries.

"After the occupation on April 9th, 1940, the Church helped the Government to re-establish peace and order. The clergy protested against the occupation, and never failed to criticise the bad conduct of German troops. They urged the people to behave themselves in a dignified and peaceful fashion, while at the same time telling them not to follow the enemy like sheep.

"The peaceful state of affairs did not last long because of the provocative behaviour of the German soldiers. Then the attitude of the Danes changed, because they could no longer rely on the Germans keeping their promises. The Danish Christians, however, had never expected them to do so.

"Denmark would never have been able to resist as it has done during recent days without the support of Danish Christianity. The Germans considered the Danish Church as one of their greatest enemies, as they have always regarded free churches elsewhere. Up to the present the Germans have not dared seriously to attack the Danish Church; attempts in this direction have never had any success.

"True Christianity and the Nordic outlook are incompatible with the outlook of the occupying authorities. Sometimes Danish priests have solemnly buried English airmen and have been courageous enough to preach on the occasion. Many priests have prevented the Germans from putting their hands on the Danish churches, and they refuse to alter the time of the Danish services when the Germans requisition the Churches.

"It is quite common for priests to refuse to put their churches at the disposal of the Germans unless they accept certain conditions. Numerous priests have had the courage to demand that the Germans should abstain from political demonstrations and from the German salute.

## Pastor Orders 1,000 Nazis Out of Church

"The following example can be quoted as characteristic:

"When the Germans requisitioned a certain country church, the vicar of the parish was present at the service in order to make sure that the Germans fulfilled the agreed conditions. The service began. Although the Nazi clergyman, who was taking the service, did not appeal to him, he abstained from any protest. But when the German chaplain began to introduce the name of Hitler into his sermon, putting him on the same plane as God, and using the salute 'Heil,' the Danish priest lost patience. He got up quickly and interrupted the service, addressing the 1,000 Germans present in a calm but forceful fashion, and telling them to leave the Church immediately. He had the satisfaction of seeing them obey at once. The Danish priest was called to the German Commandant, but he took no notice of this order and waited until the Commandant went to his house.



"Hundreds of examples of a similar courage can be quoted. We may recall the letters sent by the Bishops of Jutland to their priests to be read in the pulpits. In these letters the Bishops openly protested against the attitude of the Germans and dealt with the subject of the Norwegian Church.

"The Ministry of Church Affairs ordered the Bishops to forbid the reading of these pastoral letters, but the Bishops refused, and on the Sunday chosen they were read from the pulpit. This was a direct challenge to the Germans who dared not interfere.

"The Danish Press was not allowed to mention these incidents, but everybody knows of them all the same. The 'illegal' papers deal with them as well as the Communist paper, *Land and People*.

"Danish Christianity has its noble knights, amongst whom Kaj Munk must be singled out, known as he is in all Christendom as a champion of Christian ideals and of Nordic collaboration. He is a man of inflexible will and extraordinary courage, fighting against the German occupation on patriotic grounds. He has contributed much to the development of the spirit of resistance. The Germans did not dare to touch him because he was too strong.

"When the state of siege was proclaimed Kaj Munk was arrested.

"One of the greatest opponents of the Germans was the former Minister of Church Affairs, Deputy Fibiger, who has worked unceasingly since his dismissal.

"After the declaration of the state of siege, all open opposition was forbidden. The Danish priests and teachers alone continued the open struggle against the occupying authorities.

"The paper which has led the fight most openly is the Christian paper *Kristeligt Dagblad*. During the first days of occupation this paper published a sensational article on the subject of zoological and botanical questions in which it spoke of a little green and voracious animal which had entered Denmark from the forests of the south in order to lay it waste. The Germans were not slow in reading between the lines, but the journalists continued to write in spite of fines.

"Eventually the Germans would not tolerate the hostile attitude of *Kristeligt Dagblad* any longer, and demanded the dismissal of the editor, Helweg Moeller. Editors succeeded one another, but nothing changed. In the end the paper was suppressed at the time

of the declaration of the state of siege. It has just appeared again and its editor, Thomsen, who was in a concentration camp, has been released.

"Danish Christians are ready to fight without intermission."

### Scandinavian Church Solidarity

The International Christian Press and Information Service of Geneva provides these details about Kaj Munk, who is referred to in the article above, and who is one of Denmark's great Christian leaders.

Pastor Kaj Munk, who was recently arrested, has become well known in recent years as a fearless champion of the freedom of the Church. The following illuminating episode has now been published:

In connection with the Norwegian Church conflict, the Danish pastors were at one time called upon by the State Ministry for Church affairs not to mention this conflict. Among the countless protests which the bishops and clergy sent to the Ministry there was a letter from Pastor Munk, of which the essential passages are as follows:

"I permit myself to inform the Ministry that I propose, not only not to obey the decree which I have received, but to act directly contrary to it. I support myself in this decision by my ordination vow. I feel myself very closely bound up with my Norwegian brethren in the faith, both because they are Norwegians and because they are brethren in the faith. They are fighting for the same ideals for which I, too, have sworn to fight. If I were to sit down as a passive spectator because of fear of men, I should feel myself to be a criminal against my Christian faith, my Danish (i.e., my Scandinavian) outlook and my ordination vow.

"It is better that Denmark's relations with Germany should get worse than its relations with the Lord Jesus.

"We clergymen exist to proclaim the Word and not to keep it silent. To make compromises with injustice would have the most serious consequences for the country and its people.

"If the Ministry for Church Affairs does not immediately withdraw its unconsidered circular, I shall feel myself obliged to approach all my brethren in the ministry, calling them to set apart one Sunday for a joint Christian demonstration in our Church for our dear and brave sister Church in Norway."



The letter closes with the well-known words of Luther: "Here I stand, I can no other. For it is not right for a man to act against his conscience."

### **B.B.C.'s 21st ANNIVERSARY Archbishop of York on Religious Broadcasts**

On the occasion of the B.B.C.'s 21st anniversary (November 14th), the Archbishop of York gave a talk on British religious broadcasting. Describing how at first the Churches were doubtful as to the suitability of the radio as a medium for religious services, the Archbishop showed how these doubts were overcome and how a Joint Committee, including representatives of various Churches, was set up to advise the B.B.C. on religious questions.

The Archbishop said that religious broadcasting had enabled the Christian message to reach large numbers of people who did not habitually go to church. It had also enabled listeners to hear well-conducted services in churches of many different kinds. It had thus done much to break down prejudice and misunderstanding between various denominations.

The Archbishop said that during the war there had been a considerable increase in religious broadcasting. In spite of the shorter time that was available for Home Service broadcasting, the amount of time given to religion had increased, while in the overseas programmes, where there had been a general increase of broadcasting time, the amount of time given to religion had risen proportionately.

### **JOINT TASK OF BRITAIN AND AMERICA**

#### **Scottish Minister's World Broadcast**

In a world broadcast from St. Michael's Church, Dumfries, on Sunday Rev. Harold A. Cockburn, who recently returned from the United States after nine months' service as liaison officer between the Protestant Churches of Great Britain and America, spoke appreciatively of the kindness shown to him by the American people, and stressed the vital necessity of the two great democracies working unitedly in the post-war world.

Preaching on the text, Psalm cxvi., verse 12—"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?"—Mr. Cockburn said: "Your welcome to me in America was more than generous, your kindness abounding. In travelling over your vast areas, in

meeting with multitudes of your countrymen, in addressing great gatherings of your people, I came to understand you, and, so understanding, I came to love you. You are indeed a great people with a noble destiny toward which to strive. When I think back on history I see that you in America and we in the British Commonwealth of Nations have much to be thankful for. In the past we of the British Commonwealth have indeed been blest of God. We have been born and bred in freedom, we have been brought up and nurtured within the sound of the Gospel, we have been protected and preserved down the centuries. But not unto us but unto God be the glory. And in these latter years when, by all the laws of logic, we ought to have been destroyed, we were saved as by a miracle. The Commonwealth of Nations stood together as a family, and, with your magnificent help from America, the day of peril was endured and the tide of battle turned. We of the British Commonwealth have much to be thankful for. You, too, in America have been greatly blessed of God, for you live in a land that was founded on righteousness. It was carved out by God-loving pioneers, a land which has cherished freedom and has held out opportunities to all mankind, a land that has never heard the tread of the conqueror or known the foot of the invader. You, too, have been brought up within the sound of the Gospel story. Yours, indeed, is a land that has been greatly blest of God. What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards us? To me the answer is as clear as day. God has been good to your land and to the British family of nations, not because we were better or wiser than the other peoples round us, but because He has for us special work yet to be done in His mighty plan for the world. He has preserved the British Commonwealth throughout the centuries, and at the same time He has brought America up to its greatest, that we might go out together to do His holy will and fulfil the purpose for which He has made us. The world is crying out for security and peace. God is calling upon us to set out on that great and glorious adventure of helping, with other like-minded nations, to build a better and happier and nobler world. There is the answer to our text. There is the only worthy answer—to dedicate our nations to the task of helping to build a new and better world for the benefit of all mankind, not to any pattern of man's making, but after a pattern shown us by God."

—*Dumfries and Galloway Standard*,  
October 27th, 1943.